

4-23-2019

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Recommended Citation

Dell'Agnese, Courtney, "The Women @ RWU Conference and Showcase: Recognizing Innovative, Creative and Cutting-Edge Work" (2019). *Featured News Story*. 634.
https://docs.rwu.edu/weekatroger_featured_news/634

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The Women @ RWU Conference and Showcase: Recognizing Innovative, Creative and Cutting-Edge Work

On May 3, join The Women's Faculty Caucus in celebrating 58 women and woman-identified faculty and staff members as they present their research, scholarship, creative talents, and more



April 23, 2019 | By Courtney Dell'Agnes '19

BRISTOL, R.I. — Joining women's empowerment and gender equity initiatives, RWU presents its first annual Women @ RWU Conference and Showcase. The event, organized by The Women's Faculty Caucus, is bringing together 58 faculty and staff from all schools, disciplines and departments to celebrate, recognize and honor the work and talents of our women and woman-identified campus members.

The Women's Faculty Caucus, co-facilitated by Assistant Dean for the School of Social and Natural Sciences Becky Spritz and Associate Professor of American Studies Laura D'Amore, is a part of the larger Women's Affinity Group at Roger Williams University. It was established to give women and woman-identified faculty the space to discuss campus climate and topics that pertain to their experiences with gender. The Caucus' main goal is to provide mentoring and a strong support system for women and woman-identified faculty in all stages of their careers.

Spritz and D'Amore emphasize the importance of mentoring in the workplace, especially among women. But they have taken a different approach to mentoring than most. Instead of the typical vertical process of women later in their career mentoring those who are earlier in their career, they have adopted a more horizontal method where participants advise one another across all stages of their careers.

For Professor of Business Management Susan Bosco, who is a member of the Caucus and conference planning committee, being a part of this close-knit and supportive group has proven beneficial to her career and the overall campus community.

"The opportunity to make better connections with other women on campus allowed me to see the common problems we encounter on campus, regardless of our position. We can brainstorm about the ways we can respond to those problems. Having that camaraderie is a benefit in and of itself," Bosco said. "We are so often isolated in our own areas that we forget the support system we have here if we are only aware of its existence. We are more likely to take action when we have a coalition with a common purpose."

In recent months, the Caucus has taken on an even bigger leadership role in organizing initiatives to improve the experiences of women and woman-identified faculty on campus. That's how the Women @ RWU Conference and Showcase came to fruition.

"Nothing like this has ever been done at RWU so it's very exciting," D'Amore said. "And in a year where women's initiatives have come up a lot in various places and women's equity has been a conversation in various places on campus, it seemed like a perfect time."

Co-sponsored by the Provost's Council, the conference and showcase is organized into five tracks: traditional research papers, roundtables, poster sessions, pedagogical workshops and art exhibits. Running concurrent sessions throughout the entirety of the day, 58 women and woman-identified faculty and staff will be presenting their work to their peers, colleagues and students.

As the Women's Faculty Caucus began planning this event, a critical component was that it would be about more than just scholarship and academia, because while the term "conference" fits for those involved in research and pedagogy, the moniker "showcase" fits better for our creatives on campus. Professor of Visual Arts Elizabeth Duffy, the lead organizer for the arts installation, says the Caucus is thrilled to highlight the faculty and staff that are devoted to making art, but the showcase will also allow students to see beyond the classroom and gain a broader understanding in the areas of expertise their faculty and staff engage in.

"This is our first arts showcase for women, and will be a great opportunity for students, faculty and staff to see the range of work being done by women here. It will open doors to new collaborations and conversations and give all of us a sense of the depth and breadth of work being made by women on campus at RWU," Duffy said. "We often know faculty and staff by what department they are affiliated

with and what school they are housed in. This event breaks down those barriers and helps us to gain a deeper understanding of each other, opening interdisciplinary conversations that we can share with our students.”

Spritz, D’Amore and the rest of the Women’s Faculty Caucus hope that after this event, the attendees will walk away with broader lens and admiration for the diversity of talents of women within our campus community, the knowledge of alternative mechanisms for celebrating the talents of people on campus and most importantly, to start a conversation about the importance of carving out a space for women in academia.

The Women @ RWU Conference and Showcase will take place on **Friday, May 3 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.** The event is free and open to the entire campus community. Registration is required for all participants and attendees. **Register** online before 5 p.m. on April 26th to guarantee your spot.

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